

Woodward—A Century Old Tradition

On October 24, 1831, when the bell on top of the four room, red brick school on Franklin Street in Cincinnati called the first classes to order in The Woodward High School, founded by William Woodward, it also called to order the first high school in the vast territory west of the Allegheny Mountains.

This fact, in itself, was enough to assure fame to any man who wishes the world to remember him; but fame was something Mr. Woodward was not seeking when he established the school that bears his name. According to the letters and memories of those who knew him, Mr. Woodward was a humble, quiet, God-fearing man to whom both fame and fortune came because of his industry and his love for people.

Although separated from them in time by over a century, in character, Mr. Woodward was very close to his Puritan ancestors who came to this country from England in 1634 and settled in Massachusetts. Later, some members migrated to the richer lands of Connecticut. It was there, in Windham County, on the Quinebaug River near the town of Plainfield, that William's grandparents, Daniel Woodward and his wife Hannah, owned a farm of two hundred acres.

On this land in a plain but comfortable farmhouse, which stood until the spring of 1913, William Woodward was born on March 8, 1768, the fifth child in a family, which eventually included eleven children. When William was about eight years old, his father, Elias Woodward, served in the American Army during the Revolution and materially aided the Colonies. There is among the records of the Woodward family preserved in Woodward High School, a receipt dated February 26, 1776, made out to Mr. Elias Woodward for "Eight Thousand nine Hundred and Seventy nine Pounds of Flour for Col. Douglas Regiment for Sixteen Days allowance."

From the books of the family which have been preserved, we can assume the Woodwards were more than lettered—they were educated. A Bible or a Speller means a familiarity with words and some time spent in school, but Voltaire's "Life of Peter the Great" and Milton's "Paradise Lost" indicate a far higher level of knowledge and culture.

All of the children were sent to school, but William was granted more than the usual Common School education. He was not robust; and in order that he might gain greater strength through an out-of-door life not quite as demanding as farming, he was given the opportunity to learn to be a surveyor.

The two Woodward brothers who came to the Northwest Territory were Levi, William's im-

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Founder's Biography Reflects Early Nineteenth Century Life

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diately older brother, and William. In the fall of 1791, William joined Levi in the settlement that was scarcely more than a military post but which is now Cincinnati. There was an acute need for surveyors, and William found immediate use for his profession. He did not, however, practice his profession to the exclusion of farming, and a grant of one acre within the corporate limits, and four beyond, made a permanent resident of him and began for him the acquisition of property. According to George W. Harper in the Woodward Annual of 1864: ". . . soon after (his arrival) we find him settled on his town acre, in the northern suburbs, near where Fifth Street Market now stands." Today we must change Mr. Harper's identification by substituting the words "Fountain Square" for "Fifth Street Market."

The following year, 1792, Mr. Woodward joined General Anthony Wayne in his campaign against the Indians, signing up as a wagon-master. When the war was over, he returned to Cincinnati.

Following his return from the army, he married Jane McGowen who died about thirteen months later. His second marriage took place in 1803 to Abigail Cutter, two years after he had been appointed her guardian.

She was the daughter of Joseph Cutter, who had brought her as an infant from Medford, Massachusetts, where her mother had died when Abigail was six months old. Her father had become rich and influential through fortunate investments in real estate and lived in a fine home on Seventh Street near Main. While farming near the present site of Music Hall, one morning, he was surprised by Indians and carried off. The men of the town formed a searching party, but after three days in which they found only his shoe and a journey that took them as far as the Great Miami River, they had to return to town without him.

Abigail was then fifteen years old, the recipient of a goodly fortune, which was augmented in later years by an inheritance from relatives in Massachusetts. From her father she received \$2,000 in money, a lot of Fifth Street where the Federal Building now stands.

he had a ship built on the Ohio near the mouth of Crawfish Creek. It was named "Cincinnatus" and was to be used for coast trading between New Orleans and Florida ports. It could not leave Cincinnati until the great flood of 1815 made it possible to float it over the falls of the Ohio at Louisville. The cargo was principally meal, and pork and lard, which Mr. Woodward himself had packed. What caused the loss, whether the ship was wrecked, the cargo spoiled, or the trading unprofitable, is not noted.

Mr. Woodward's best investment and greatest interest was in real estate. Besides his property within the city limits,

it was found he had spent, in indorsing for friends in need of financial assistance, nearly one hundred thousand dollars. Mr. J. P. Foote, a friend of Mr. Woodward and at one time one of the Woodward Trustees, says in "Schools in Cincinnati and Vicinity": ". . . the writer has known him to stop his cart at the door of an old neighbor, and, after a chat with him, and hearing his complaint of want of means to make some improvement in his property, to offer to aid him with his credit for that purpose."

This unostentatious generosity was in perfect keeping with the character of William Woodward and with the simplicity

considered some way of providing education for those who could not afford it. Prior to this time William Woodward had contributed to the educational facilities of the Lane Seminary. It was in 1819, though, that being asked to increase his donation to Lane Seminary, Mr. Woodward stated that he had "another plan as to such a matter," and would not increase his donation to the seminary.

Mr. Woodward's own educational plan began to take shape. On November 21, 1826, he signed a document turning over to Samuel Lewis a lawyer and long-time friend of his and Osmond Cogswell, as trustees, about seven acres of land for "the better educating of the poor Children of Cincinnati." This document was signed by Abigail, for part of the seven acres had come from her father.

The act of incorporation of the trustees was passed by the Legislature of the State of Ohio within a few months after the deed was signed, January 24, 1827, naming the body as "The Trustees of the Woodward Free Grammar School." Three years later, however, in March, 1830, before any school had been opened or any complete plan for the opening of a school had been formed, permission was given the Trustees "to change to a certain extent the direction or application of said fund, so as to enable the said Trustees and their successors in office to establish a High School for teaching the higher branches of learning and literature with the arts and sciences . . ." The original idea of extending " . . . the advantages of learning and science among those who have not the means of procuring such advantages themselves," was not forgotten, for an equal number from each ward in the city were to be admitted "without regard to religious opinion or differences of opinion on any other subject."

On February 4, 1831, a meeting of the Trustees was held to approve the plans for ". . . the erection of a house forty feet by fifty feet square." In April, the first teacher was hired, T. B. Wheelock "as professor of mathematics." Two other teachers were appointed before the opening of school, Claudius Bradford, Professor of Languages, and H. L. Rucker, Professor of Academic Department. In November, Dr. Joseph Ray joined the faculty



WILLIAM WOODWARD

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of his ways. During his adult years he was a thin person of medium height, weighing about one hundred and twenty pounds, retiring at nine o'clock at night and arising at four in the morning. Although he

recipient of a goodly fortune, which was augmented in later years by an inheritance from relatives in Massachusetts. From her father she received \$2,000 in money, a lot of Fifth Street where the Federal Building now stands.

This farm, stretching from Woodward Street to Liberty, from Main to Broadway, was bought by Levi from John Cleves Symmes for \$11 and sold to William for \$400. Here, in 1803, when he married Abigail, William Woodward built a home of rough-hewn planks from the flat-boats which were knocked apart when they reached their destination at Cincinnati. This house was held together by wooden pegs. In 1816, a fine brick house with hand-carved woodwork was built on the corner of Main and Webster (East Fourteenth) Streets, immediately in front of the former house. The two houses stood there together for many years, the plank house being torn down in the early 1860's, the brick one about 1912, a few years short of having stood one hundred years.

Mr. Woodward was aware of the needs of a growing community, and in satisfying these needs he carried on successful enterprises that have led to the names of "farmer" and "tanner" being used in connection with him.

In 1813 Mr. Woodward opened a tannery. Although not a tanner by trade, but with the assistance of a friend, Mr. Woodward developed a little business into a large one adding much to his wealth.

There is on record only one business venture in which Mr. Woodward entered that is described as "a total loss." In 1813,

which were extended to Liberty Street during his lifetime, he had property in what is now Avondale. To this, in 1832, he added ten acres for which he paid \$675. This made his holdings extend from the present Blair Avenue to half-way between Lexington Avenue and Mann place, from Reading Road to the east section line which is the dividing line between the property of the Walnut Hills High School and the park bordering Victory Parkway.

Besides helping the city grow with his personal industry, William Woodward also devoted his time and energy to being a public servant. He was elected to the office of Coroner of Hamilton County and was for several years a member of City Council. He donated a plot of land on Sycamore Street to be used for a jail and other purposes. He gave freely towards the erection of the First Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, a frame building which was later replaced by one of brick. Towards the erection of the second building, he was also generous, giving three thousand dollars as well as his time and energy in hauling.

William Woodward's religion went further than just contributing to the erection of a church. Each night, before retiring, he read a chapter in the Bible. When a choir-master was hired by the First Presbyterian Church, Mr. Woodward, although late in life, joined the singing class and helped to pay the master's salary.

To unknown charities, Mr. Woodward was more than generous. After his death

of his ways. During his adult years he was a thin person of medium height, weighing about one hundred and twenty pounds, retiring at nine o'clock at night and arising at four in the morning. Although he was always good-natured, even jovial, he never knew a day of perfect health in his life; yet he worked, even when a rich man, from morning to night, on his farm or in his tannery or assisting in the erection of some new building or improvement on his place. J. P. Foote describes him: "It was edifying and amusing to see Mr. Woodward . . . in the tow frock and trowsers, such as had been the common costume of farmers in New England in his youth, driving his oxcart about the streets of Cincinnati, and laboring with all the energy of youth in the ordinary avocations of a farmer . . ." Students of the first Woodward High School remembered seeing Mr. Woodward, at the age of 61, working on that part of his farm opposite the school. When erection of the building was commenced, he hauled away the first cart load of earth from the excavation for the cellar.

His home was always open to friends. When the several children that were born to him and Abigail each died in infancy, he and his wife took into their home no less than seven others whom they reared as their own.

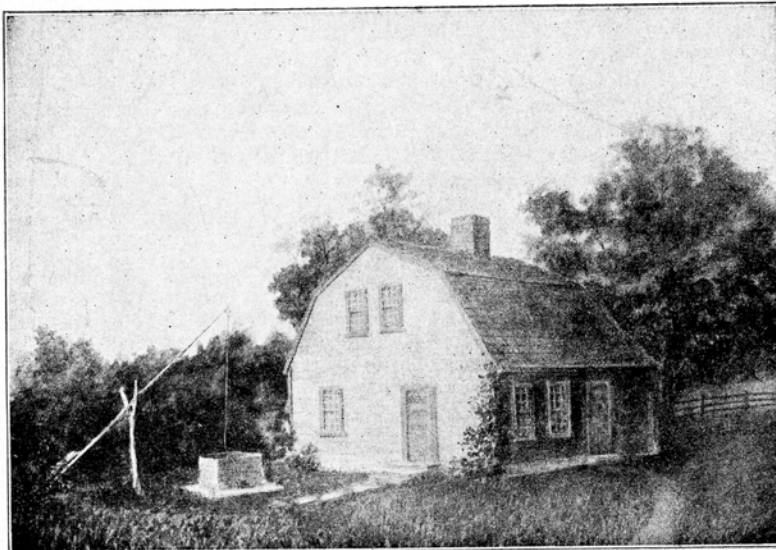
In 1830 then, William Woodward was sixty-two years old, he had about completed his plans for endowing a school. As early as 1819, Mr. Woodward had con-

teacher was hired, T. D. Winchell as professor of mathematics." Two other teachers were appointed before the opening of school, Claudius Bradford, Professor of Languages, and H. L. Rucker, Professor of Academic Department. In November, Dr. Joseph Ray joined the faculty.

On January 24, 1933, fifteen months to the day after the opening of the school, Mr. Woodward died. City Council in a Tribute of Respect inscribed in the minutes January 25, 1833, that having "learned, with feelings of sorrow of the death of their highly respected and venerable neighbor, William Woodward: and conceiving this a suitable time for a public expression of their gratitude for the munificent bequest made by him to the City of Cincinnati . . . do resolve

"That, deeply impressed with the important benefits conferred on our city, by the liberal donation of our late fellow-citizen, William Woodward: and as a mark of that respect which we individually entertain for his private virtues, — the members of the City Council will attend his funeral, in a body, tomorrow morning at ten o'clock."

William Woodward was a man to respect in life and to remember long afterwards. When looking at the list of those who have been graduated from Woodward High School, one knows that the spirit of Mr. Woodward has never died, for that which made him a person to respect lives on in the deeds of those who have been educated at the school he founded.



WOODWARD'S BIRTHPLACE

The pre-revolutionary New England farmhouse pictured on the left is the birthplace of William Woodward. It was from this wilderness that Woodward set out in 1791 to settle the newly opened Northwest Territory.

WOODWARD HOME

Twenty-five years later, as a successful businessman, William Woodward built the home shown at right. The house stood for nearly a century on the corner of Sycamore and East 14th Streets. The mantlepiece, a few articles of furniture, and the front door of this home are preserved in the Memorial Room on the second floor of this building.

